

**Libby Community Advisory Group
Meeting Summary
May 11, 2000**

Introductions

Gerald Mueller and Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG) members present introduced themselves. A list of the members in attendance is attached below as Appendix 1.

Agenda

Mr. Mueller reviewed an agenda for this meeting including the following topics:

- Reports & Presentations
 - Ron Anderson
 - Lerah Parker
 - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Community Medical Trust Proposal
- EPA Written Responses to CAG Member Questions
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Answers to CAG Member Questions
- Public Comment Period
- Next Steps - Meeting Date and Agenda

Report by Ron Anderson

Ron Anderson, Director of the Lincoln County Department of Environmental Health, reported on a \$12,000 grant his department recently received from the National Association of City and County Health Officials. The grant purpose is to support continued asbestos sampling after the EPA work is completed, and thereby continue to assure the Libby community that living here is safe. The funding will be provided to support two phases: \$6,000, including \$2,000 of start up money, to develop a sampling plan, and \$6,000 to implement the plan. We plan to sample the water system and ambient air and to spot check homes.

Question from CAG member: Can the grant be renewed?

Answer: No.

Question from CAG member: Who will decide what and where samples will be taken?

Decisions about the sampling will be made by the County Department of Environmental Health after consulting with the public and this group.

Question from CAG member: Will the grant be used to purchase sampling equipment or to analyze samples?

No, these funds cannot be used to pay for sampling equipment or for analyzing samples taken.

Presentation by Lerah Parker

Ms. Parker shared the ill effects of asbestos contamination on her family business, Raintree Nursery, on her family, and on the Libby community. After learning that the Nursery was located on a site contaminated with asbestos, the former screening plant site, the Parkers imported vermiculite and other materials used in growing their plants from non-asbestos contaminated sources. However, the community refused to purchase products from the Nursery, and the Parkers shut down their entire operation, including growing and selling of seedlings, shrubs, bedding plants, and mushrooms. Ms.

Parker clarified that while her business is closed, she is not out of business. The Parkers continued to live in a home that EPA testing has demonstrated is contaminated with unsafe levels of asbestos. The closure of the business and the contamination of their home has caused both emotional and economic problems for the family. Ms. Parker appealed to the CAG and the Libby community to work together and quickly identify and clean up the asbestos contamination and to ensure that the cleanup doesn't cause more harm. She also asked that the health of both Libby people and businesses be addressed.

EPA Report

Wendy Thomi

Ms. Thomi reported the EPA and the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR) have a stress management team that can assess local needs and arrange for training for local health professionals focusing on mental health issues arising from communities facing contamination with hazardous substances. She asked if the CAG would be interested in hearing about the potential services. CAG members requested a presentation from this team at a future meeting. Ms. Thomi also reported that EPA is planning on sponsoring or cosponsoring a conference in Libby on public health issues arising from asbestos contamination; again the CAG supported the idea of such a conference. She also reported that she had contacted CAG members who have missed several meetings to see if they still wished to be CAG members. Ralph Heinert and Denis Leonhardt have decided to resign from the CAG because their schedules have not allowed them to attend CAG meetings. Bob Zimmerman wishes to remain a member. Finally, Ms. Thomi reported that EPA Region 8 has a new acting regional administrator, Rebecca Hanmer.

Carol Ray requested, and the CAG agreed, to ask ATSDR to address at a future CAG meeting the cumulative health effects of smoking and asbestos contamination. Ms. Ray also asked that the city and county consider banning smoking in all public places because of the harmful effects it has on those suffering asbestos-related disease.

Comment from CAG member: A CAG member pointed out that one of the written questions for ATSDR asked about the significance of wood smoke and slash burning as well as smoking tobacco for getting asbestosis.

EPA Response: Historically, Libby had high ambient air concentrations of both particulate and asbestos, and that this combination may have contributed to the high incidence of asbestos disease in Libby people.

Paul Peronard

Mr. Peronard began by acknowledging that in the past EPA did not do right by this community. As an agency, EPA should acknowledge its mistakes and learn from them so that they need not be repeated. He also suggested that the Libby community should reach out to the Parkers because of the health concerns and loss of business they have suffered.

Cleanup of the Export and Screening Plant Sites

Mr. Peronard reported that EPA has decided that it will clean up the screening plant site and that it will issue an administrative order to W.R. Grace to clean up the export plant site. Work plans for these site cleanups should be available in the local EPA office next week. EPA intends to complete the screening plant cleanup by the end of the summer. Cleanup of the export site will take somewhat longer. Generally, the cleanups will involve moving people and their businesses from these sites to uncontaminated locations, inventorying equipment now at the sites and deciding what can be cleaned and what must be disposed of, demolishing buildings on the sites, and excavating contaminated soils

and trucking them to the mine for disposal. Water or foam (magnesium chloride or calcium chloride) will be used to abate dust. Clean soils will be used to back fill and restore site original contours.

The two most significant concerns the community will likely have with the clean-up process will be the truck traffic and dust abatement. EPA will file transportation plans with the Department of Transportation and with the City. EPA will request the United States Forest Service to close the Rainy Creek road from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Monday through Saturday during the screening plant cleanup. EPA estimates that 4,000 truckloads of contaminated soil must be removed from the screening plant site and 1,500 truckloads from the export plant site. Because of the closure of the bridge over the Kootenai River, EPA may temporarily stockpile contaminated soils at the export site and/or may rely on convoying trucks carrying from the site. Trucks will be decontaminated using water before leaving the sites, and any stockpiles of contaminated soils will be covered with a 20 millimeter thickness HDP cover with exposed working faces wetted to abate dust.

EPA's prime contractor for its cleanup is MARCORE. For the cleanup of the screening plant site, EPA anticipates bringing in six managers and will hire about thirty-five laborers. EPA will provide hazardous materials and asbestos training locally so that people from Libby can fill twenty to twenty-six of these positions.

Question from CAG member: Has EPA sampled soils across the river from the Parkers?

Answer: Yes. The flat plain area is not contaminated except for two piles

Funding for Screening Workers Who Have Moved Away From Libby

Mr. Peronard continued that the initial response to his request for the \$250,000 to provide screening for workers and their families who have left Libby was positive. A final answer is expected in two weeks. If funding is forthcoming, EPA will opt to maximize the number of people screened when deciding whether to screen workers and their families near their present locations or to provide funds for traveling back to Libby. Again, assuming the requested funding is made available, it will likely be possible to screen the workers and their families who have left Libby by the end of the summer so that data from these people can be included with the Libby screening sample.

Audience Question: What about people who were contractors at the mine but were not direct W.R. Grace employees?

Answer: People who lived in Libby for six months prior to 1990 qualify for screening. People who worked at the mine as contractors rather than direct W.R. Grace employees and their families who have left the Libby EPA qualify to be screened. EPA now has a list of former Grace employees but not of contractors.

ATSDR Medical Screening

Mr. Peronard further reported that medical screening will begin on June 26, 2000. A contractor to ATSDR is telephoning everyone living within 2 ½ miles of Libby. People outside this area who wish to be screened can call the toll free number 1-800-439-8308. To date over 700 people have been scheduled for screening, and some 300 turned away as ineligible.

Question from CAG member: Why does a screening appointment require a two and one-half hour period?

Answer: The screening is accompanied by a written 160-question questionnaire. These questions should be answered because they are critical to the ability to correlate disease incidence with life and

exposure history.

Audience Question: Where is the money for the screening coming from?

Answer: The money comes from the EPA Superfund operating funds. EPA will seek cost recovery from W.R. Grace.

House Sampling Data

Mr. Peronard reported that EPA has now completed rounds of sampling houses in March and in April. Results from the March sampling have been reported at earlier CAG meetings. April results should be available in three to four weeks. EPA plans to correlate asbestos soil and insulation concentrations with ambient air concentrations. So far, no correlations are evident. The air asbestos concentration versus disease risk and asbestos fiber length and shape versus disease risk also are not yet known. EPA intends to resample houses to check consistency of results. We will also attempt to assess air concentrations resulting from in home vacuuming and from gardening activities such as rototilling. Ambient air sample in town and at the mine will continue monthly. Water samples will be taken in June.

Audience Question: Can medical screening results be correlated with in door air quality?

Answer: Possibly, but individual houses may have multiple histories, i.e. more than one family may have lived there, which will complicate the analysis.

St. John's Hospital Community Medical Trust Fund Proposal

Rick Palagi, St. John's Hospital CEO, reported that pursuant to the CAG's decision at its last meeting, the Hospital did send a letter to EPA and ATSDR requesting funding support for establishing a community medical trust. Copies of the letter were previously mailed to CAG members. Mr. Palagi also stated that the Hospital has retained the services of two attorneys from the Holland and Hart firm in Billings who have the expertise to set up a trust. We will not be able to assess Libby's medical needs and how large the trust should be to meet the need until after the ATSDR medical screening is completed. Mr. Palagi requested volunteers for a sub-committee to work on the trust proposal. Cyrus Lee, Leroy Thom, Gala Benefield, and Sandy Wagner volunteered or were volunteered to serve.

Audience Questions and Statements

- *Question: Is federal legislation being proposed that would prevent an industry from spewing pollution and toxic materials over an entire community?*

Answer - Existing legislation including the Clean Air Act makes such activity illegal without additional legislation. EPA is not aware of any additional legislative proposals.

- *Question: The CAG has requested that the EPA pay to move the Parkers to an uncontaminated location. Will the same thing happen for the Burnetts?*

Answer: The Burnetts and their business will be moved by W.R. Grace as a part of the export site cleanup. Cleanup at this site will begin about three to four weeks after EPA begins work on the screening plan site.

Next Steps

The next meetings scheduled on Thursday, May 25, June 8, and June 22, 2000 from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Ponderosa Room of the Libby City Hall. The May 25 agenda will include review of the Grace Medical Plan, and EPA's, St. John's Hospital's, and W.R. Grace's written responses to CAG member questions.

Appendix 1 **CAG Member Attendance List** **May 11, 2000**

Name	Group/Organization Represented
Rick Palagi	St. Johns Lutheran Hospital
Paul Peronard	EPA
Ron Anderson	Lincoln County
Carol Ray	Covering Kids
Mike Switzer	Asbestos Victim
Mayor Tony Berget	City of Libby
Cyrus Lee	Kootenai Valley Headstart
Linda Beaulieu	Libby Chamber of Commerce
Bob Tunis	Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation
Grayson Casey	Kootenai Homes and Land
Wilbur Wilson	Lincoln County Council on Aging
Les Skramstad	Asbestos Victims
Commissioner Rita Windom	Lincoln County
Don Wilkins	Lumber & Sawmill Workers
Gayla Benefield	LCAVRO
Leroy Thom	Former Grace union employee and local businessman
K.W. Maki	Libby School District
Wendy Thomi	EPA
Commissioner John Konzen	Lincoln County
David F. Latham	The Montanian
Chris Poulet	ATSDR